

First, a cozy cottage ...

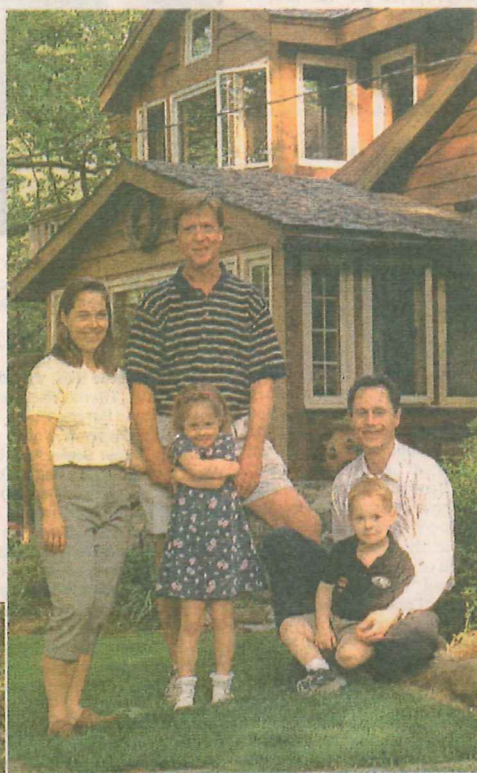
... then, a roomy retreat ...

... finally, a family haven.



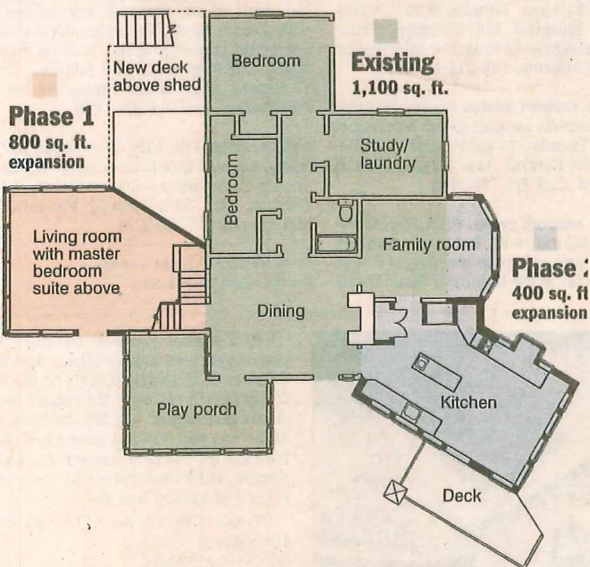
FROM COTTAGE TO CASTLE

Over seven years, two additions and other improvements have turned a cramped, camp-style home in Delaware County into a cedar-sided woodlands wonder.



MICHAEL PEREZ / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Wayne Reichart more than doubled his original 1,100 square feet of space. Reichart (center, top right) was single when he and brother-in-law Paul Macht (right) began the project. Then along came Linda, then children Lauren and Brendan.



By Diane Goldsmith
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Wayne Reichart says he's lost count of how many folks want first dibs on his rustic Thornton retreat, should he ever desire to sell.

"Don't list your house," they urge him. "Just let me know."

Such reactions don't surprise the Benchmark School athletic director.

He, too, fell in love with his Delaware County home when he spied it by Brinton Lake 15 years ago. Then a blue clapboard cottage, "it was nothing I'd want in a house, but was charming and sat on the most incredible lot I'd ever seen."

But with a very limited view of the lake and waterfall just across the road, and the home's 1,100 square feet divided into tiny rooms, Reichart felt hemmed in.

In sharing his frustrations with his architect brother-in-law, Paul Macht, Reichart got the ball rolling on what has become a dramatic makeover.

Now, two additions later — with the whole structure done in cedar siding, stone and lots of glass — it's become an airy haven for Reichart and his family. And the view is there for the gazing — from a kitchen sink positioned to face the

waterfall to a treetop-high deck with a vista of the area.

"People ask how I ever leave for work in the morning," Reichart said, as black-capped chickadees vocalized from birdhouses posted throughout the rolling land. "Most mornings, I take it all in. I get a dose."

So what was Macht's first assessment of the place?

"It was originally a camp cottage house — very dark inside, with tiny rooms," said the Rydal architect. But "there was a lot of wood in the old structure, so there was an opportunity for the addition not to be a world of drywall."

In keeping with the tall-treed site, Macht began to think in terms of high ceilings and exposed beams as he mapped out an addition to the left of the original structure. A half-level down, he would create an 11-foot-tall living room, and above it place a master bedroom suite and wraparound deck. The topography of the gently rising land was a factor in determining proportions.

"The strategy became to mimic existing shapes and scale and roof lines in the new piece," Macht recalled of the work, begun in fall 1991 and completed the next

See **MAKEOVER** on E12

Not only more room, but more views

MAKEOVER from E1 summer, which added 800 square feet, exclusive of the deck. Cantilevers were used inside and outside to support and stabilize the deck, which extends beyond the living room.

Inside the addition, a see-through staircase leading from the living room to the bedroom makes the new wing feel airier. And in the master suite, space left between the tops of interior walls and the high, exposed rafters — a point of architectural interest — also encourages that feeling.

"It's a way to make relatively small spaces seem larger and to

make it feel more open, and open up unique views," Macht said.

"For example, when you go to shower in the morning," a few steps up from the hot tub in the bathroom, "you can see over the top of the old roof, and then you can look above at the beams and contemplate how the whole thing is not going to fall down on your head," he joked.

That sense of discovery continues as you open the screen doors from the bedroom to the deck. There, through a veil of trees and evergreens, a restful view of the property awaits.

"It's nice to come out here when you wake up in the morning," said Reichart.

"I feel like I'm in the bird world. The builder did a good job of keeping the trees, which gives you a cool playhouse feeling up here."

As if that weren't enough, a few steps around a corner on the deck take you down to a surprise area tucked away above the old shed. A few Adirondack chairs and a twig table provide roomlike coziness in the outdoor space.

"It's a great place to read and

So Macht returned to the drawing board to design a kitchen and family room.

"Basically, we decided to do it on two levels" with the family room below-ground, Reichart said.

"Then we hit a boulder the size of New Hampshire and construction stopped right there. And it all started to make sense, why the house had been built where it was — tucked onto one side of the lot and forward."

So Macht developed a plan all on ground level that bumped out the old kitchen into a new family room and created a large new kitchen — angled 30 degrees to the right for the best view of the lake.

"I love the lake," said Linda, a computer systems analyst. "Especially when I work at home, I'll get up and look outside, and it's peaceful."

"You can see the waterfall from the sink as you do the dishes," her husband pointed out.

That second wing, finished in 1998, brought the home's total area to 2,300 square feet and cost \$75,000, making the tab for the entire makeover \$142,000.

Clad in stone, the front of the second addition expands on the material at the base of the previous structures. That helps anchor the whole and makes it seem less like a collection of "little boxes stepping up a gentle slope," Macht said.

The six-foot extension on what is now the family room is capped by an elegant bay window with a copper roof. Inside, shelving along the walls where a typical ceiling might start helps offset the height of the room and provides space for display. Vintage blocks there spell out the word *Welcome*, making the

room — which also serves as a home office for Linda — seem cozy.

Beyond the window, a curved retaining wall, with flourishing clematis and pink-and-yellow honeysuckle in beds atop it, hugs the building. Nearby, Santa Fe-style copper lanterns complement the woody exterior and flagstone patio.

A string of copper rain-cups hangs by an entrance, catching the sun.

"People say, 'Can I come by when it rains?'" said a bemused Reichart.

He smiles, surrounded by his oasis, talking about how he takes the children to picnics by the waterfall and canoeing on the lake.

"We've looked at other areas," he said. "I love Chester County, Chadds Ford.

"But we still come home and it takes two seconds for us to look at each other and say, 'Are we nuts?' There's something so special about this place that we'll never leave."



MICHAEL PEREZ / Inquirer Staff Photographer
The former kitchen was expanded and turned into a bay-windowed family room. The new kitchen adjoins this room, which is also a home office.

hang out," said Reichart. "The kids love it," and it makes visitors marvel. "What a funky house you've got. Where do I enter and where do I exit?"

No questions arise about his choice of siding, though — a beautiful, rich cedar — which makes the house seem like an extension of the trees and grounds. It covers both the original 1940s cottage and its new wing.

In re-siding the original structure, Macht was able to add a layer of rigid insulation to make the building more energy-efficient. He tries to work such measures into all his architecture.

"The new walls and ceilings contain a vapor barrier and more insulation than is typical," he pointed out. "And all the finishes used inside were made from natural products.

"This project is not a prime example of a lot of the ones I do that are extremely energy-efficient and geared to indoor air-quality," Macht said, "but it was the best we could do."

That the windows to the lake don't face south stymied efforts to add a passive solar element, he added.

But the new windows are all double-insulated with argon gas. And all that glass certainly changes the look inside.

"There was a desire to have rooms light-filled and open — busting out of the old cave and reaching toward the light and the beautiful lake," Macht said. With the original cottage, only the play porch and the former living room, now the dining room, had a view to the lake.

So Reichart was satisfied that he had gone a ways toward achieving his goals. Thanks in part to Macht's free services, he was out only \$67,000 for the addition and the new windows and siding.

Then in July 1993, life changed for the bachelor when he began dating Linda Heary. By December, the couple were married, and their daughter, Lauren, now 5, and son, Brendan, 4, arrived in quick succession.

"We knew we'd need space — the kitchen was a big thing," said Linda. "We didn't even have a table in there. And we didn't have a family room where the kids could go as they got older.

"I wanted it to be the kind of house where they'd want to bring their friends over ... where they would feel welcome and it would be their own place."